



U.S. Department of Justice

*United States Attorney
District of Maryland
Northern Division*

*Allen F. Loucks
United States Attorney*

*Vickie E. LeDuc
Public Information Officer*

*36 South Charles Street
Fourth Floor
Baltimore, Maryland 21201*

*410-209-4800
TTY/TDD: 410-962-4462
410-209-4885
FAX 410-962-3091
Vickie.LeDuc@usdoj.gov*

**APRIL 13, 2005
FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

**FOR FURTHER
INFORMATION CONTACT
VICKIE E. LEDUC, AUSA
(410)209-4885**

**IRANIAN PLEADS GUILTY TO
ATTEMPTED EXPORTATION OF ARMS AND MONEY LAUNDERING**

BALTIMORE, Maryland - United States Attorney for the District of Maryland Allen F. Loucks announces that Abbas Tavakolian, age 58, of Tehran, Iran, pleaded guilty today before U.S. District Court Judge Richard D. Bennett to attempted exportation of aircraft parts and components for F-4 and F-14 fighter aircraft, and money laundering.

According to the agreed statement of facts presented to the court, Tavakolian attempted to export munitions list items from the United States to the Republic of Iran which are controlled by the Department of State, specifically aircraft parts and components for F-4 and F-14 fighter aircraft, without first having obtained the necessary license for such exportation. On July 20, 2004, Tavakolian transferred about \$5,980 from Panama to the United States to acquire the aircraft parts.

Tavakolian contacted undercover agents by electronic mail and telephone conversations to acquire military use technology from the United States for use by the Iranian military. The Munitions List technology sought by Tavakolian included gunnery system components for F-4 and F-14 fighter aircraft. One such component was the M61A1 Vulcan six-barrel, rotary action, "inner drum" which was essential to feed ammunition into the multi-barrel 'gattling gun' of the offensive

weapon system of the fighter aircraft. Tavakolian sought 100 of these "inner drums".

On June 2, 2004 Tavakolian met with undercover agents in Europe to obtain an "inner drum". On July 20, 2004 Tavakolian sent \$5,980 via wire transfer as a down payment for the purchase of the "inner drums" and other embargoed or prohibited items. A second down payment of \$4,000 was wired and on September 16, 2004 an additional \$10,000 was sent to the undercover agents. Tavakolian subsequently agreed to meet undercover agents in the South Pacific and acquire the items for shipment to Tehran, Iran which cost approximately \$380,000. Tavakolian agreed to deliver 25% of the cost when he took delivery of the items.

On December 10, 2004 Tavakolian arrived in the South Pacific from Iran. He subsequently met with undercover agents and examined the "inner drum" and other Munitions List and prohibited items compiled at his request by the undercover agents. Satisfied that the items were in order, Tavakolian directed the agents to fill out shipment paperwork for DHL delivery services for the shipment of the items to Tehran. He also directed the agents to label the items as agricultural equipment in order to disguise the true nature of the items. Tavakolian then paid undercover agents \$100,000 in United States currency and compensated them for the DHL shipping costs. Tavakolian was present when a DHL representative took custody of the items. ICE agents subsequently intercepted and took custody of the items.

On December 11, 2004 Tavakolian was arrested by U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement (ICE) and Defense Criminal Investigative Service (DCIS) agents and taken into federal custody after another meeting with undercover agents in which Tavakolian sought to acquire several complete F-14 fighter aircraft for future shipment to Iran.

Under the terms of the plea agreement, the parties have agreed to ask the court to sentence Tavakolian to 46 to 57 months in prison. Tavakolian remains in federal custody pending sentencing

scheduled for Wednesday, July 6, 2005 at 2:30 p.m.

United States Attorney Allen F. Loucks stated that “Preventing the illegal export of military technology has long been a priority for the Office. The need to prevent the export of crucial military technology has only become heightened in recent years. It demands the unique attention and substantial resources of federal, state and local law enforcement to bring cases like this one to address this threat.”

Cynthia O'Connell, Special Agent-in-Charge for U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement, Baltimore, stated that "In the post 9/11 world, keeping sensitive U.S. weapons technology from falling into the wrong hands has never been more important. This case clearly demonstrates the importance of aggressive export enforcement, given the military items involved in this plot and their intended destination."

Joseph McMillan, Special Agent in Charge for the Defense Criminal Investigative Service, Baltimore, stated that “Our military technology provides our warfighters with the edge to fight and win conflicts. It is vital that we use available resources in a collaborative way to thwart the illegal transfer and diversion of our strategic technologies to proscribed nations and individuals that pose a threat to our National Security.”

This case was investigated by the Defense Criminal Investigative Service, the U.S. Immigration and Customs Enforcement and the Baltimore City Police Department. The case is being prosecuted by Assistant United States Attorney James G. Warwick.